


The Student Voice in Kentucky

Student-based recommendations on
Reforming Secondary Education in
Kentucky

Introduction

- Last winter students from North Oldham were trained to lead discussion groups around the state on the topic of secondary issues in Kentucky
- This student group split up and traveled to five geographically diverse locations in the Commonwealth.
- Once the student discussion leaders returned to North Oldham, it became their job to compile the results into a cohesive body of work.



Since that time, this information has been shared with groups and organizations all over the state including the state Board of Education.

Today, this information is shared with you.

Topics of Discussion

We were able to group the responses into four main discussion points:

- Lack of Preparation for the Next Step
- Personalized Education
- Student-Faculty Relationships
- Middle to High School Transition

Lack of Preparation for the Next Step

1. CATS

- ◆ “teaching to the test” results in overemphasis on insignificant material
- ◆ CATS prep and scrimmages take away from valuable instruction time
- ◆ Material covered by CATS is not always useful and is not aligned with expectations of the next level

We Recommend:

- Structuring CATS more like the SAT or ACT would benefit Kentucky students
- Student incentives such as KEES money for higher scoring students would help relieve some of the burden of motivation to do well and add student accountability

Lack of Preparation for the Next Step

2. Counselors/Advisors

- ◆ High school counselors are too often overextended
- ◆ Students feel “unnoticed” by their counselors making them inaccessible to those needing their services the most

We Recommend:

- Schools should utilize numerous advisors who will be able to devote time and attention to students
- Teachers also need to be brought into the mix.

Lack of Preparation for the Next Step

3. Access to High Level Classes

- Students are denied access to high level coursework due to nonexistent programs
- Scheduling discrepancies are often roadblocks to high level coursework

We Recommend:

- more options in terms of foreign language and college credit classes
- supporting block scheduling options
- supporting performance based credit rather than seat time based credit so students may move on when they have mastered material
- Classes in high demand should be offered in more than one block
- Independent study should not be left out of the equation

Personalized Education

Electives

- Some students desire to build impressive transcripts with a variety of classes

We Recommend:

- Kentucky must ensure that each school offers a breadth of elective options that include in-depth course work.
- In-depth course work should include both core academic classes and viable electives

Personalized Education

Senior Projects/Internships/Etc.

- Rich experiences through senior projects, internships, co-op placements, dual credit options and others should be available to all students in all schools
- Senior projects should provide students with the opportunity to explore an area of interest of personal value to them

We Recommend:

- Give as many students as possible to ability to follow their passions and study something of value to them

Personalized Education

- Individual Learning Plan

Students are looking for a road map to the next step

We Recommend:

- Individual learning plans should be implemented and used
- Plans need to be comprehensive, charting a course that brings everything from coursework to extra-curriculars together
- Plans should be a result of a collaboration between teachers, students, counselors and parents

Personalized Education

Core Requirements

- Students like the idea of focusing on the core content during the first two years of high school
- Students cautioned that such a plan be flexible so that when mastery is demonstrated, students may move on to the next level

We Recommend:

- Every high school should implement, appropriate to their population and community, a system of core requirements that will ensure mastery of important subjects by all of Kentucky's students

Student-Faculty Relationships

- Students want personable and visible administrators who truly stand for the students in their school.
- Students are looking for teachers who are able to make students feel good about being in school and about learning.

We Recommend:

- Kentucky needs to do everything it can to find those teachers and those administrators who will be devoted to providing students with the best high school experience

Middle to High School Transition

- Students thought that transitions between middle and high school were considerably lacking
- Some felt the process of adjustment was a hinder to their academic performance

We Recommend:

1. A thoughtful process

- Deliberate and effective transitions must be created between the middle schools and the high schools in every county throughout Kentucky

Middle to High School Transition Recommendation:

2. Continuing Curriculum

- Material covered in the freshman year of high school should be a direct continuation of concepts learning in middle school
- New concepts should only be introduced when students have the background needed to understand
- Middle and high school curricula must be carefully compared to ensure that this will be the case

Middle to High School Transition Recommendation:

3. The Campus Concept

- A middle school and high school in close proximity that have a common identity work together to see every student through to the end are indicative of a strong transition into the high school years
- Mentor programs help form meaningful relationships between students of different ages, something that is empowering to younger students
- Common school identity generates support for the entire campus throughout the community and results in students feeling valued and connected to the school

Real Life

- This student voice piece was my senior project
- I learned lessons by working through this process I could never have learned in a traditional classroom setting
- My school was visionary enough to give me this chance

What This Means

- The Kentucky Board of Education reform initiative has never been more important than it is right now
- It will take deliberate, visionary leadership to make my experience and to make the voices of Kentucky students this body of work represents a reality for every Kentucky student

Next Steps

- What do these student voices say to you?
- What implication do these voices have for you and for your organization?
- What other information would be helpful for you to have from the students?